Ontario Hydro-Electric
Power Commission
1922-1924

[Miscellaneous documents]

INTERVIEW WITH

Mr.J.E.Middleton

on

30th May, 1923.

COMMISSIONERS

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ONTARIO

Hydro Electric Inquiry Commission

36 KING ST. EAST

TORONTO

INTERVIEW WITH MR. J. E. MIDDLETON,

30th May, 1923.

ROAD NO. 1, 1832.

MILEAGES ALONG MR. T. E. MIDDLETON'S

J. E. MIDDLETON
Canadian Writer and Editor

427 Gladstone Ave.,
TORONTO, 29th May, 1923.

MEMORANDUM For the Gregory Commission, re Services of J. E. Middleton with the Hydro-Electric Power Commission.

On April 27th, 1920, I was asked to meet Sir Adam Beck at his office, and found him there in company with Mr. Lucas and Mr. Gaby. Sir Adam asked me to undertake the editing of The Bulletin and to do other publicity work as might be required. He offered me $250. a month. I considered the salary inadequate but accepted the position because I was anxious to remain in Toronto where my spare time could be profitably used in "sidelines" and because I thought that it was a good thing to be connected with a large and growing organization. I expected, of course, that the appointment would be of a permanent nature, and a week after my appointment I declined to consider an offer to accept the editorship of a large Ontario daily newspaper.

Ten days after that offer was declined Sir Adam informed me that there was a conflict of opinion between the Commission and the engineers over The Bulletin and that it might not be possible to retain me in the service. Meanwhile I prepared a plan of continuous newspaper publicity and submitted it for consideration. It was approved and I remained in the service -- but still on a temporary basis.

The plan was as follows: The thirty-eight daily newspapers in Ontario were arranged in four groups; forty weekly newspapers with a circulation exceeding 2,000 each were arranged also in four groups. I undertook to supply two signed articles per month for each group, which made 16 articles per month, and gave every considerable paper in the province an exclusive article every two weeks. These articles averaged about 500 words each. Once a month they were sent out in manuscript, the typing being done by Miss Keating's Department. Once a month they went out in stereotype mats and plates, at an average cost of about $65. The mechanical work was done by The Woodstock Sentinel-Review at a very moderate fate. The total outlay for mechanical processew did not exceed $800. a year. I maintained my own office and did not even have a desk in the Hydro Office.

As to the nature of these articles, I had only one instruction from the Chairman -- that I was not to use his name. It was understood that I was to deal in general with the organization and progress of the institution. For a few weeks all articles were sent to the Chairman for his approval. Then he turned over the task of reading them to the other Commissioners, Mr. Lucas and Col. Carmichael.

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As to the nature of these articles, I had only one instruction from the Chairman -- that I was not to use his name. It was understood that I was to deal in general with the organization and progress of the institution. For a few weeks all articles were sent to the Chairman for his approval. Then he turned over the task of reading them to the other Commissioners, Mr. Lucas and Col. Carmichael.

Nothing went out without the approval of two Commissioners. One one occasion exception was taken in the Legislature to one of these articles. I had a conference with Sir Adam and Col. Carmichael and assured them that I would write nothing of an embarrassing nature. I did not touch on the Radial issue -- since there was a difference of opinion on it -- and confined myself to a discussion of the Power Systems, their financial organization, the method of rate-making, the comparison between Hydro rates and the rates of Power Companies here and in the United States, the various campaigns of hostility organized by friends of the corporations, coal-saving and other economic advantages of the Hydro, and Municipal Ownership in general. A complete file of these articles can be found at the Head Office.

I handled two advertising campaigns for the Commission when the Balance Sheet of the Niagara System was printed in all Dailies, and last year I supplied the Canadian Press with a series of weekly articles summarizing the operating reports of all the more important municipalities.

About a month ago Mr. Ramsden met me on the street and said that he and Col. Carmichael did not want to be bothered reading the special articles. He said that when he mentioned the matter in the Board, Sir Adam said "If you are not satisfied why not let Middleton out?" Evidently they were agreed, for a few days later Mr. Pope wrote me terminating the engagement.

I am not willing to lie under the implication that the service was ineffective. During July and August of last year I kept track of the number of Special Articles used in the various newspapers and sent the report to Col. Carmichael. The average every two weeks during the period mentioned was 96 inches, or 1,344 lines. The average display advertising rate in dailies and weeklies used is 10¢ a line. Reading matter is invariably charged for at double the display rate. The space value of the material used every two weeks during last summer was $268. If the Return was a fair average for the year (and I believe that it was) the value of the service to the Commission was $6,968. a year, for which it paid $3,800.

Generally speaking I devoted my mornings to the Hydro work and was free to use the afternoons in literary and historical activities. For that reason I valued the Hydro connection. I consider that the dismissal was without justification. I had no political relationships either on one side or the other; the engagement was a business one, and dismissal without notice and without a hearing is something to which I have not been accustomed.

J. E. Middleton.

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J. M. Middleton

INTERVIEW - MAY 30TH, 1923.

THE CHAIRMAN: Your service comes to an end this month?

MR. MIDDLETON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: What did you pay the newspapers?

A - I paid them nothing except on those two advertising campaigns. Nothing was paid for the use of these articles. That was a rather sore touch with some of the newspapers. They refused to use them because we would not pay.

Q - Did they hint they would like to have some money?

A - Yes. They thought they should have some display advertising.

Q - Did you have any connection with the radial campaign?

A - No.

Q - During the Sutherland Commission did you send anything out about that?

A - I wrote a couple of articles about that time -- that was before the question had crystallized as between the Government and the Commission -- before the Sutherland Commission report I wrote a series of articles on the nature of the evidence. There was an article about Mr. Gaby's evidence and one or two others of that nature. That was the only touch on that subject.

Q - And after you sent the articles out you sent copies to the Commission?

A - Yes. After the article the manuscript copy came back to me, after it was printed, and those manuscript copies were turned over to Mr. Brookes. They have everything except for the first two or three.

Q - And have you dealt with this Inquiry Commission in your articles?

A - I have not even mentioned your Commission.

Q - I thought there was an article upon which Carmichael and Sir Adam did not agree?

MR. HANEY: From a newspaperman's standpoint the best way to kill the prominent men is to leave them alone!

THE CHAIRMAN: Is any other matter going out except what you send out. Does any go direct?

A - I do not know.

Q - Have you any reason to believe that any other matter is going out?

A - I haven't the slightest idea. I never inquired. I have never seen anything.

THE CHAIRMAN: When a campaign is going on in a certain locality is there anything sent out. When the Cornwall campaign was going on did you send out articles?

A - No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Your article appears in 1st and 2d's records?

MR. [illegible]: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Were you put into the newspapers?

A - I said that nothing except on these two occasions. Nothing was paid for the use of these articles. That was a matter to do with with some of the newspapers. They printed to suit their purposes as would not say.

Q - Did they ask they would like to have some money?

A - Yes. They thought that should have been digging civilizing.

Q - Did you have any conversation with the radical communist?

A - No.

Q - Regarding the Canadian Communist did you send anything out about that?

A - I wrote a couple of articles about that also — that was before the question had crystallized as between the Government and the Communist — before the Communist Commission report. I wrote a article of articles in the course of the criticism. There was no article about it. Only's evidence was one or two criticism or that matter. That was the only thing or that subject.

Q - And after you made the articles for you were trying to the Communist?

A - Yes. After the article the secretary's copy came back to me, after it was printed, and then secretary's copies were issued over to the Lenin. They have translating another the first two or three.

Q - And then you went with this Inquiry Commission in your article?

A - I have not even mentioned your Commission.

Q - I thought there was an article upon that Commission and it then day two agreed?

MR. [illegible]: Just a newspaper's exaggerated the best way to kill the proceedings that is to leave them alone!

THE CHAIRMAN: Is any other reason going on except what you said. Does any go dismal?

A - I do not think.

Q - Have you any reason to believe that any other matter is going out?

A - I haven't the slightest idea. I never inquired. I have never seen anything.

THE CHAIRMAN: When a campaign is going on in a certain locality is they anything sent out. When the Communist campaign was going on did you send out anything?

A - No.

Q - Do you join forces and go out?

A - No, I have not even been notified that such a meeting was being held. I have never attended a Hydro meeting since I have been there.

Q - Have you any idea as to the reasons for the termination of your engagement?

A - I haven't, no, except as explained in that letter.

Q - Have you seen any of the Commissioners yet?

A - I have not even seen Sir Adam. I saw Mr. Pope, and I told him it was an unfair arrangement, but if they were satisfied it was their business.

Q - Have you any written instructions from the Commission?

A - No, sir.

Q - Have you got copies yourself of what you have sent out?

A - No, sir. I thought that filing was sufficient, but those could be obtained from Mr. Brookes.

Q - Did you have any conferences with the Commission from time to time?

A - Very very seldom; only in case of complaints. I would go for weeks without seeing any of the Commission.

Q - You did not get suggestions as to what youshould write about?

A - No, sir.

Q - Did you write notes that appeared in the Hydro Bulletin?

A - I have never written a line for the Bulletin.

Q - Who writes the Bulletin?

A - I do not know.

Q - Do you know, Mr. Bower?

MR. BOWER: I imagine Mr. White.

MR. R. A. ROSS: It is a technical thing. It is written by the engineers; a little propaganda with regard to stoves and that sort of thing but it is all technical stuff. Of course there are signed articles.

MR. GREGORY: Would you write any of the advertisements?

A - Only the big ones of which I spoke. I wrote an Ad. for the Galt Reporter, I think it was last fall some time. That was the only thing of that nature.

Q - What papers are you engaged on?

A - I am not engaged on any at the present time. For the past two years I have been writing an elaborate history of Toronto for the Thompson Publishing Company, New York, and occasional literary articles to the New York magazines and Toronto magazines, and I have had no connection with the newspapers except for that.

Q - Did you have any connection with the Ontario Municipal Association?

A - No, sir.

MR. J. A. ROSS: Where did you get your materials on which you based your articles?

A - From the officials; from Mr. Pierdon and Mr. Gaby and Mr. Jeffrey of the Power Commission.

Q - Do you join forces and go out?

A - Oh, I have not even been notified that such a meeting was being held. I have never attended a Hydro meeting since I have been there.

Q - Have you any idea as to the reason for the termination of your employment?

A - I haven't, no, except as explained in that letter.

Q - Have you seen any of the Commissioners yet?

A - I have not even seen Sir Adam. I saw Mr. Hope, and I told him it was an unfair arrangement, but if they were satisfied it was their business.

Q - Have you any written instructions from the Commissioners?

A - No, sir.

Q - Have you not copies yourself of what you have sent out?

A - No, sir. I thought that filing was sufficient, but they could be obtained from Mr. Hoskes.

Q - Did you have any conversation with the Commissioners prior to that?

A - Very very seldom only in case of complaints. I would go for such matters meeting any of the Commissioners.

Q - Mr. Hill put forward suggestions as to what constituted a right to

A - No, sir.

Q - Did you write into that opposed to the Hydro Bulletin?

A - I have never written a line for the Bulletin.

Q - Who writes the Bulletin?

A - I do not know.

Q - Do you know, Mr. Howey?

MR. BOWEN: I imagine Mr. White.

MR. R. J. MCCAW: Mr. is a technical clerk. It is written by the engineers; a little programme with regard to above and that sort of thing that is all technical stuff. Of course they're the signed articles.

MR. HOWEY: Would you write any of the advertisements?

A - Yes, the big ones of which I spoke. I wrote on it for the Daily Mercury. I think it was that full page ad. That was the only thing of that nature.

Q - What papers did you employed and

A - I am not employed on any at the present time. For the past two years I have been writing on electric history of Toronto for the Telegram Publishing Company, New York, and mechanical literary articles to the New York magazines and Toronto magazines, and I have had no connection with the newspapers except for that.

Q - Did you have any connection with the Toronto Municipal Electric Association?

A - No, sir.

MR. A. E. ROSS: Where did you get your materials on which you based your articles?

A - From the articles from Mr. Jackson and Mr. Gray and Mr. Gentry of the Power Commission.

Q - Did you have any background or information or knowledge about Hydro before you undertook this work?

A - Nothing at all; I came in as a new man.

Q - And they gave you what they thought they wanted covered?

A - No, it was hardly that way. When an article would be written it would be questioned. Some objection would be made to a certain article as not being the fact. Mr. Pierdon would have these facts, or someone else, and I would get the facts cleared in that matter. I went very closely into the Annual Reports and got pretty clear facts from them.

Q - But your copy was passed by the Commission who gave you the information and in that way they guided?

A - They were signed articles, signed by me and not expressing anyone's views but my own. I made my own subjects and inquired from them about certain facts I was not clear about. They were my views as far as I was able to discover.

Q - I can't account for the fact that they should discontinue a campaign which is a free campaign and amounts to a column a week or every two weeks. If a private company got a column a week for nothing they would take it and never let go of it. It not only is very much better than display space, for which we pay, but it is free. It is the best stuff you can possibly buy and I can't see why they discontinued it. What is your own idea?

A - My own idea is, perhaps -- at least Sir Adam told me -- I have no right to say this -- but once or twice he said, "I don't see many of those articles in the papers," and only from that I judge he may have thought they were not getting as much as they should get. I have no other reason to think -- and it is because of that suggestion from him that I traced it up a couple of months just to see what would happen.

Q - Still that would hardly be a reason on his part for discontinuing it?

A - No.

Q - Anything at all would be better than nothing. If they had a column or two columns a week that would be better than nothing?

A - Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: What articles were those objected to in the Legislature?

A - I think they had reference to the earlier campaigns of the Chairman; I am not positive, I cannot recollect the exact article. It was referred to by Mr. Dewart and read, and some objection was taken to it. Any way the Government thought they would be embarrassed if they would have to explain an article like that. I can't give you the trend.

THE CHAIRMAN: You said objection was taken from time to time?

A - For example, some statement might be made that was at variance with the facts regarding the financial organization, or something of that sort, and there would be a query at the side, "You had better see Mr. Pierdon" or Mr. So-and-so.

Q - Did you have any background or information or something about Spies before you worked with MVD?

A - Nothing at all; I came in as a new man.

Q - And they gave you what they thought they needed to convert?

A - No, it was exactly that way. Some one article would be written it would be published. Some objection would be made to a certain article or not being the truth. Mr. Fisher would have read that, or someone else, and I would get the Author clarify in that matter. I went very directly into the Lenard Tragedy and get every data from Moscow.

Q - But your copy was passed by the Commission who gave you the information and in that way they verified?

A - They very rigid analysis, signed by me and not contradicting Moscow's views but my own. I made my own analysis and learned from them about certain facts I had not taken account. They were my views so far as I was able to discern.

Q - I don't account for - the fact that they should contribute a conclusion which is a free conclusion and submit to a column a week on every two weeks. It is a pretty company for a column a week for nothing they would sell it and never let go of it. It not only is very much better than sinking opinion, for which we pay, but it is free. It is the best opinion we can possibly buy and I don't see why they discontinued it. What is your own idea?

A - My own idea is, perhaps -- at least Sir Adam told me -- I have no right to say this -- but once or twice he said, "I don't see many of these articles in the papers," and only from this I judge he only knew thought they were not printing as much as they could get. I have no other reason to think -- and it is because of that conversation from his that I thought if by a single article that is we don't would happen.

Q - Until that would merely be a reason on his part for discontinuing it?

A - Yes.

Q - Anything at all would be better than nothing. If they had a column or two columns a week that would be better than nothing?

A - Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Such articles were those printed as in the Leningrad?

A - I think they had reference to the article concerning the Chairman; I am not positive. I cannot recollect the exact article. It was referred to by Mr. Lenard and read, and also Pilnyak and others by it. Any way the statement thought they would be embarrassed if they would have to explain an article like that. I don't give you the trend.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do said objection was taken from time to time?

A - For example, some statement might be made that was at variance with the facts regarding the financial organization, or something of that sort, and there would be a proof at the side. "You had better get the 'Pravda' or Mr. So-and-so.

MR. HANEY: That was done before the article appeared?
A. - Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You mentioned some objection was taken, was this after the articles were published?
A - No, not after they were published, only one, that was the one in the Legislature. No objection was taken to it by the Commission and I think even Colonel Carmichael was satisfied.
Q - Did the Colonel read them all for a while?
A - That is for him to say; I cannot say. I know they came back O.K. An institution as large as thenHydro should have a regular publicity department just as any corporation of its size.

MR. J. A. ROSS: And buy their space?
A - Buy some space.

MR. HANEY: Do you think it is necessary when they are a monopoly?
A - It may not be necessary except that it is a public institution and the people have a right to know what is going on.

MR. HANEY: That is your view?
A - Yes.

THENCHAIRMAN: It would be educative?
A - Yes.

MR. J. A. ROSS: And it costs money for newspaper display. This news, which is live news to everybody is also advertising and they should be paid for it?
A - I don't see where they should be paid for all of it, but I should say that at regular intervals there should be some such expense as was incurred with reference to the balance sheet -- to print at certain intervals some advertising to keep the newspapermen satisfied.

MR. J. A. ROSS: You would pay for as much as was necessary to get the balance free?
A - Yes, that is the idea.
Q - In what papers did you publish the balance sheet?
A - All dailies in Ontario and the Montreal Gazette. The Weeklies complained, but they did not get any advertising.

MR. J. A. ROSS: From the knowledge or the study of Hydro matters which you must have made would you say that it was necessary to have an established medium of publicity to enable the people to realize what Hydro is doing and to get a better picture of what Hydro's real object?
A - I should think so. My view about it is that the general publicity about Hydro affairs is fragmentary and spasmodic; that the information comes out in the course of political or industrial speeches; perhaps some member of the Commission, or someone else, and there is no definite, steady feeding of news to the public, and very often that information that does go out is clouded by some side issue or perhaps by some subject on which the people are very strongly di-

MR. KEMP: Was it done before the article appeared?
A - Yes.

MR. CHIPMAN: Was permission as to objection was taken, was this after the articles were published?
A - No, not after they were published, only one, that was the one in the Legislature. No objection was taken to it by the Board or and I think even Dominion Steel was satisfied.
Q - But we called some time all for a while?
A - That is my idea to say I cannot say. I mean they came back to me. An institution as large as Canada should have a regular publicity department just as any corporation of its size.

MR. J. A. MCPH: And buy their report?
A - They some again.

MR. KEMP: Do you think it is necessary when they are a corporation institution and the people have a right to know what is going on.
A - Do not think it necessary except that it is a public

MR. KEMP: That is your view?
A - Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that a subsidiary?
A - Yes.

MR. J. A. MCPH: Did it cause money for newspaper subsidy. This news which is like news to everybody is also advertising and they should be paid for it?
A - I don't see where they should be paid for all of it, but I should say that at regular intervals there should be some reports to the Journal with preference to the Sydney Post -- to place at certain intervals some advertising to keep the correspondence alright.

MR. J. A. MCPH: You would pay for as much as was necessary to get the information?
A - Yes, that is the idea.
Q - In what proportion do you publish the balance about?
A - All besides in Sydney and the Provincial Capital.
The Weekies complained, but they did not get any advertising.

MR. J. A. MCPH: Now the newspaper or the study of Sydney matters which you must have made you say that it was necessary to have an extraordinary publicity to enable the people to realize what Sydney is today and to get a better picture of that Sydney that objects?
A - I should think so. My view about it is that the general publicity about Sydney affairs is inexpensive and something that information comes out in the course of political or industrial operations; perhaps some member of the Dominion, or someone else, and there is no doubt, steady feeding of news to the public, and very often that information that has been put out is alarmed by some side issue by some writer or some the people are very strongly di-

vided, and there is no advantage in putting it out in that way.

MR. J. A. ROSS: Do you think it is possible to tell in a simple way to be intelligible to the average readers the Hydro story; take for instance the financial features, the sinking fund, etc., How nearly can you get the story over to the public through the Press?

A - I dealt with it and I thought I delivered the story.

THE CHAIRMAN: Of course you were an advocate of the Hydro. You were not an impartial critic?

A - Perhaps not. I believed that the Hydro was a good institution and I considered Sir Adam Beck did a good deal for the Province. My sympathies were with Sir Adam and the Hydro, and while I have never been a politician, still I have had enough experience in politics to know that there were some things which I should leave alone.

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